

# Congressman Elijah E. Cummings

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*A message from  
Congressman Elijah E. Cummings*



*It is both a privilege and honor to represent you in the United States Congress. While serving you, I will continue outreach efforts to further inform you of legislative action in Congress. I welcome your advice. Government "by the people" is the cornerstone of my legislative philosophy.*

*Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress*

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## **Keeping Amtrak in Operation**

As a Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Congressman Cummings, on June 25, urged for \$200 million in federal loan guarantees to keep Amtrak in operation. Congressman Cummings and several of his colleagues sent a joint letter to the Leadership of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees requesting the loan guarantee from the Supplemental Appropriations bill. The Members also co-sponsored H.R. 5024, a bill to direct the Secretary of Transportation to make a loan guarantee available to Amtrak.

Members took these actions a result of Amtrak's June 24 announcement that it had a \$200 million budget shortfall and would consequently have to shut down operations, within days, if it did not receive a loan guarantee from the federal government.

"Thousands of commuters around the nation will be stranded if Amtrak does not immediately receive needed funds," Congressman Cummings said. "If Amtrak were to cease to exist, the state of Maryland would have to face the possibility of replacing the equipment, real estate, labor, maintenance, and storage at its own cost - something the state could not afford."

Congressional efforts helped to avert the anticipated shutdown by providing Amtrak with a \$100 million loan guarantee from the U.S. Treasury. However, this amount was only half of what Amtrak had requested to continue operating.

"Amtrak is vital for many of my constituents and for thousands of Americans," Congressman Cummings said. "Therefore, I am confident that our initiatives in Congress will save Amtrak and allow it to operate for many more years."

On a daily basis, Amtrak serves 60,000 passengers nationally, including 35,000 riders who go through the Boston-to-Washington Northeast Corridor. This route includes various stops throughout the Baltimore area and the Maryland Rail Commuter service (MARC).

In 1997, Congress required Amtrak to become operationally self-sufficient within five years. But Amtrak has found it difficult to achieve this goal due to the Bush Administration's FY 2003 budget allocation of \$521 million, nearly half of the \$1.2 billion requested by Amtrak.

"I am disappointed with the Administration's limited funding because it would require states, such as Maryland, to shoulder significant cost burdens," Congressman Cummings said.

## **A \$3.7 Million Federal Grant for Port Security in Baltimore**

In late June, Congressman Cummings, in his capacity as a Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, announced that Baltimore City and the Maryland Port Administration will receive a \$3.76 million federal grant to improve port security. Congressman Cummings worked with Maryland's U.S. Senators Paul S. Sarbanes and Barbara A. Mikulski and Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin to secure this grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"The grant will help secure the port in the event of a terrorist attack and also provide law enforcement and rescue services in the area," Congressman Cummings said.

Baltimore City will receive \$500,000 from this grant to fund weather-proof boats for 24-hour security patrol. The Port will receive the remaining \$3.26 million for guards, lighting and cargo-screening.

## **Congressional Black Caucus Examines Progress of Civil Rights at Juneteenth Forum**

On the 137<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Juneteenth, Congressman Cummings, as First Vice Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, joined the Caucus in discussing civil rights with nationally-recognized civil rights leaders and activists. At a forum held on Capitol Hill, the Members addressed the progresses and obstacles of the civil rights struggle since June 19, 1865.

Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration of the ending of slavery. The event marks the historic date of June 19, 1865, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, when Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, TX with news that the war had ended and that all slaves were now free. Today, it is commemorated across the nation to remember the sacrifices made by past generations of African Americans.

“We should never forget Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and what he taught us about the power of love and the efficacy of non-violent social change. We should not forget Malcolm X and his message about self-worth and the economic preconditions of freedom, but I, as a lawyer, admire and honor the late Justice Thurgood Marshall,” Congressman Cummings said.

Leaders testifying at the forum included Mary Frances Berry, Chair, U.S. Civil Rights Commission; Wade Henderson, Executive Director, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; Laura Murphy, Director, ACLU; Bill Lann Lee, former Asst. Attorney General for Civil Rights; and Ralph Neas, President, People for the American Way.

During his testimony, Neas, of the People for the American Way, commended the CBC for its work in opposing judges who failed to show a strong record in protecting civil liberties.

“I salute you for (your initiatives) in protecting the nation from constitutional chaos,” Neas said. “If judges without strong regards for equal rights are appointed to the federal judiciary, more than 65 years of progress in civil rights could be overturned. That is why we need leaders like you who continue to instill the hope that all Americans will continue to have fair and equal protection under the law.”

The forum also presented testimony examining advances, as well as setbacks in voting rights, education, health care, environmental justice, and the overall economic situation in the minority communities.

Congressman Cummings said, “Across America – and in every important area of our lives – civil rights are under attack. Those involved with civil rights issues at various organizations and the government, as well as those of us who serve in the Congress of the United States – must be on the forefront of liberty’s defense. We should keep this in mind as we commemorate Juneteenth.”

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## **Congressman Cummings Announces Nursing Grant**

On July 1, Congressman Cummings announced that Coppin State College received a \$285,984 federal grant for its Nursing Education and Practice Program.

The grant will provide federal funding for the first year of a three-year initiative to expand Coppin State’s Bachelors of Science Nursing Program from 170 to 273 students. In recent years, limitation in public funding for the nursing program has compelled Coppin State to

deny the admission of two out of three qualified applicants. The grant will also fund nurse-managed centers that improve access to primary care in medically under-served areas.

“Since most of Coppin State’s nursing graduates practice in high poverty areas in Baltimore, this will add 103 more nurses in the community, in the next few years.” Congressman Cummings said.

Through the grant, the community will have access to some of the nation’s most qualified nurses since Coppin State’s graduates have the highest passage rate (90%) on Maryland’s Nursing Board qualifying examinations.

The federal grant is provided through the U.S. Health and Human Services Department. Congressman Cummings worked with Senators Paul S. Sarbanes (D-MD) and Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD) and Congressman Ben Cardin (D-MD) to secure this grant, which is \$55,000 higher than the average amount given to similar programs.

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## **Congressman Cummings Hosts Health Fair on Kidney Disease**

On Wednesday, June 26, 2002, Congressman Cummings hosted the third annual kidney disease health fair on Capitol Hill. The health fair offered free screenings for blood pressure and glucose levels to determine possible risk and provide information on the latest research on kidney disease. Medical experts were also on hand to answer questions about the disease.

Congressman Cummings said, “Knowledge is power and we should all arm ourselves with the power to fight kidney disease as best we can. The first step is to become familiar with the problem.”

Kidney disease works as “the silent killer.” Most people with kidney damage are unaware that their kidneys are beginning to fail. Without functioning kidneys, the body can no longer rid itself of certain toxins and cannot properly regulate blood pressure and critical nutrients. The following facts on end stage renal disease (ESRD) are staggering:

- Each year the number of ESRD patients increases by 9%.
- Diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure) are leading indicators of kidney disease in 66% of all cases;
- More than a third of the ESRD population are African-American, Native American, Hispanic, Asian, or Pacific Islanders.

To further address the issue, on June 25, Congressman Cummings introduced H.Con.Res.426 which expresses a sense of Congress regarding the awareness and treatment of kidney disease. The resolution drew numerous co-sponsors.

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*Have a Happy Fourth of July!*